

TETHERED

His cart's tethered to a tree.
Bearded, sweating, he tugs
at his gloves and tightens
a leather belt cinching his waist
another notch as he "pumps iron,"
a bicycle handlebar rimmed
with auto repair shop discards.
Clutching library books, a man hums
and mutters, "One man's sidewalk
is another's gymnasium."

A THEORY OF HUNGER

I wash my hands.
Leaning on a desk
as I write, paper
puckers with dampness.
Better dry
those hands again.

If it isn't visible,
it isn't theater.
Poetry
is the theater
of the invisible.

GLOVE WORK

Gray light summoning grey
mutes the yellow core
of his cornflowers, sprouted
from last year's debris.
Nine months now: His death
is being born, a geyser-stalk
of lettuce gone to seed.

ONE MIRACLE

— for Bob Flanagan (1952-1996)

I remember poking at embers as dawn
puffed mist into a clearing, its rim notched
with empty tequila bottles, scattered
sleeping bags, Bob's acoustic guitar, jayhawks.
Every other song he'd start coughing
a lot, slowly stop. Even then, I wondered
how can he last much longer than his sister?
"Nobody with cystic fibrosis sees thirty."
Every time his body jerked, I winced.
I loved his improvised, contaminated genius.
Tonight he's in the hospital again, alone,
and this poem is like a waitress who deserves
a big tip — half the bill — for telling me
it's time to stop drinking coffee and drive over
and rescue him, perform the one miracle
I'm allowed to in this life, but I'm not,
because he's not the one I'm supposed to save.

— Bill Mohr

Los Angeles CA